

Idaho Trade Token Newsletter

Boise, Idaho

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News

One item I forgot to mention in last month's issue is the answer to the question "How did the papers of L. H. Sweetser end up at the University of Oregon?" It seems that, since Sweetser had no children and his wife preceded him in death by several years, all of his effects went to a cousin in California. The cousin did not have close ties with him and really had no interest in the papers. Since he had attended the University of Oregon, he donated the material to them. As far as I can determine, Sweetser never set foot in the state of Oregon, so I made an informal request of the Idaho Historical Society that they request the material from Oregon.

Hollis Pincok recently published **Idaho Tokens For Collectors**, an 8½ by 11, spiral bound listing of Idaho trade tokens for which he had information. It is in four sections: Idaho tokens in alphabetical order, Idaho tokens in town order, Idaho towns in alphabetical order, and Idaho towns in county order. His price is \$25., but I don't know whether there are postage or other charges. Contact Hollis at 1500 North 10th Street #2, Boise, ID 83702 for more details.

eBay

If you are not active on the Internet, this may not be of much interest to you. However, it may be that "nudge" you need to join the crowd there. One of the fascinating aspects of the Internet is the vast array of things going on – things that are revolutionizing even our hobbies. Most of us are familiar with the traditional methods of acquiring tokens to add to our collections: "beating the bushes" to obtain them from non-collectors, using a metal detector to recover them from the earth, buying at local auctions, antique stores, or estate sales, and bidding in the mail bid sales of fellow dealers and collectors. Now there is the new dimension of Internet companies [eBay and several others] where on-line auctions are conducted. Those of us who have watched this develop over the past few years have been amazed at what we have seen, so here are a few stories and tips on how to join the fun.

Here's Ron Haberman recounting what he did: *"Several weekends back I was at the local flea market at the fairgrounds here in Boise, not really looking for anything and really not expecting to find much. I did spot and buy a Jim Beam bottle I liked; it is the 100th Anniversary of baseball, 1869-1969. I had one of these several years ago and sold it for \$25. Maybe I could make a few bucks again.*

After walking around for awhile I had not found much, but I did find some interesting tokens. The dealer had six of them. They were the Southern Pacific Hotel and Saloon Tres Pinos, Cal. Good for one Drink. They were round, 25mm and made of Aluminum. The best part was the dealer only wanted \$1.00 for each. I figured, a token from a small town I had never heard of in California, it being a Saloon token, it had to be worth more than a buck. So I bought five of them. The last one was pretty worn and I left it there.

The next evening I put my theory to the test. eBay was my choice to sell it. It took me about 5 minutes to make up an ad and place the token on the Internet. I figured if I was lucky, I might get \$30.00 for it. After the second day the bid was already up to \$66.00. I was happy! In the mean time I mentioned this to people I work with and they got interested. Some of them had

never heard of eBay, but now there are a few more users of this great service. Anyway, as the close of the auction arrived, the bidding got hot: \$90, then over \$100. It was starting to get silly, where would it end? Towards the end of the bidding the jumps were over \$20 each. I was in awe. The high bid, \$190+, went to a guy from California, who lives in the county of this little town and had a high interest in this token. It was an interesting morning at the flea market after all."

So, how does this all work? Since this whole concept requires you have a computer with an Internet connection, don't let the lack of those tools stop you. Many (if not most) libraries now have public access terminals, or you can find a friend who is "on line".

First, (and pardon the jargon), point your browser to <http://www.ebay.com>, their homepage. At the top of that screen, you will find a blank to fill in next to a "search" button. Type **token** in the blank and tell eBay to search. The reply will come back with several hundred, perhaps thousands of "hits". Not only will it show the type of tokens we collect, but token-ring computer gear, 45-RPM records by the Tokens, and who knows what else. The list will consist of eBay item numbers for each auction, a short description of the thing being sold, the current high bid, the number of bids made so far, and a time when this particular auction will end. If you find an item of interest, click on the item, and a new screen will appear. This will contain details about who is selling the item, who is high bidder, payment terms, and a more detailed description of the item, perhaps even including a picture.

If you think you have spotted a bargain and want to bid, you must first register. This process is analogous to what is found at most auctions: you have to get a bidder number. In the case of eBay, go to the homepage and follow the instructions to register. The only real requirements are a valid e-mail address and agreeing to follow their house rules. During registration, you will make up a password and have an option to use an alias instead of a full e-mail address for your user name. You can change these later if you wish.

Having done that, go back to your item, scroll down to the bottom of the description, and you will find a spot to place your bid. Read the terms of the sale, paying particular attention to methods of payment and shipment terms. Enter your user name, password, and the amount you want to bid. Click on "review bid" and you will go to a page that details the agreement you are about to enter into. If all is satisfactory, click on "submit bid", and you have just passed the point of backing out! Follow the action by returning to your item as the auction progresses, and seeing if you are high bidder. The system generates e-mails to you on a daily basis indicating that you are high bidder. It also will tell you if you have been outbid, allowing you to go back and increment your bid if you wish. At the end of the sale, e-mail messages are sent to you and the seller saying that you won and that buyer and seller should get in contact.

At this point, eBay bills the seller the 25¢ posting charge and a percentage commission and is finished with their work. The seller then e-mails the buyer with the calculation of the final amount (usually the selling price plus postage and insurance), and the seller's mail address. You should then e-mail an acknowledgment to the seller, and put his money in the mail. At this point, you are operating on trust that the seller will send the goods. When you receive your purchase, it is good "netiquette" to revisit eBay's feedback area where you make a comment about how the seller treated you. This is a two-way street, and the seller can comment on you. These positive/neutral/negative comments are tallied into a score that is posted every time you buy or sell. It is a good idea to avoid dealings with people who have negative scores.

The more complicated aspect of eBay is to become a seller. I saw how Ron did his sale, but realize that pictures added a lot to items for sale. I have just recently figured out the process,

so here is one way to do it. The first requirement is to have access to a scanner, and the second is to have some place where you can "post" the pictures. I use either my Hewlett-Packard Photo scanner or my Umax flatbed scanner plus the software that came with them, saving the scan as a ".jpg" type file. The next step is to post the image on the Internet. There are several outfits offering free posting space, but since my Internet Service Provider includes space as part of their package, that is what I use. See Robert's article for other options.

My Internet browser software is Netscape, so that is the example I will use. It has a section called **Composer** that is the tool used to build a home page. With this program, I simply told it to add the scans of each side of the token ("front.jpg" and "back.jpg") to my home page. I then used the "Publish" part of the program, filled in the address of my home page, connected to the Internet, and clicked on the "Publish" button. This process uploaded the two .jpg files by copying them from my PC to my home page. You can see what is there by pointing your browser to <http://www.users.uswest.net/~tokens/index.htm>, my homepage.

Then, with the scans visible to anyone who knows where to look, I went to the sellers area of eBay and followed the instructions on placing an item for sale. In this area, I composed a one-line description of my item. It is important to plan this description in order to maximize your audience. Regulars on eBay have developed search techniques so they let the system do most of the work sorting through the thousands of sales going on at any one time, but sellers are not consistent in their descriptions, so some search "hits" are bypassed. For instance, I often search for "Idaho token". If a seller lists "Ida.Token", my search will miss it. If I make the search real broad and search for "ID", I get flooded with spurious "hits" for Caller-ID boxes, etc.

Next in the selling process is to set a minimum bid, a reserve bid, the length of the sale (normally 7 days), specify payment and shipment requirements, and give a more complete description of the item. In this description area is the key to posting a picture: here I said to find the scans at <http://www.users.uswest.net/~tokens/front.jpg> and [../back.jpg](http://www.users.uswest.net/~tokens/back.jpg). After previewing the look of my sale page on eBay, I clicked on "submit" and the auction was underway! Now, instead of my surplus tokens gathering dust in my trading book, they are out on the World Wide Web earning their keep. Instead of being seen every now and then by the relatively small circle of token-collecting acquaintances I have, anyone in the world with access to the Internet can check them out. Not only is this generating some income, but I am certain there is a growing number of people joining the hobby. This is great, for as we all know, new collectors find new tokens and we all can benefit. Back to the details of eBay for a moment, remember that eBay is in business to make money, so they don't provide this service for free. Sellers pay a commission that is detailed in the information provided. It is pretty nominal as they make their money in volume. When starting your sales career, you have an automatic \$10.00 account established. By the time your commissions owed total \$10.00, you should have provided them with a credit card account which will be billed for cumulative charges.

Several of us have been having e-mail discussions on some aspects of this new form of auction, starting with the question "should we make a 'gentlemen's agreement' not to bid against each other?" I think the consensus is not to have such an agreement. If there is an item you want badly, it is advisable to send a message to that effect to other Idaho collectors. The concept is similar to mail bid sales, except here you have some idea of who is bidding against you. Other things to be aware of are there can be "shills" in league with the seller to drive the bids up, and there are "snipers" who wait until the last possible moment before entering a bid leaving you with no chance to up your bid. The safest practice is to determine your highest bid and stick by it, letting the system raise bids for you to your maximum.

Following is a neat tutorial from Robert Higdem which I will copy in its entirety:

Posting Images Onto On-Line Auctions by Robert Higdem

In the last two years, we have witnessed the tremendous rise in the use of Internet or “on-line” auctions. I personally began my foray into this realm of token hunting in 1997 with the purchase of a new computer. I had to experience this “web thing” I had heard so much about. In no time, I had discovered eBay and soon found myself firing off bids left and right for tokens I just couldn’t live without. After being a buyer for a while, I thought I would try my luck on selling. I dug through my collection and pulled out a bunch of my duplicates and other low-grade/value common pieces to experiment with. As some of you may have seen, I was able to quickly move the pieces and with a little profit as well. In fact, I sold off a large number of Idaho Trade Tokens that were among the most common examples for over five dollars apiece! For example, I purchased an Andy’s Cigar Store, Buhl (B-10(a)) for 23¢ at a recent coin show in Boise and sold it for \$5.06 on-line. In one month, I sold \$26.00 worth of common trade tokens for a profit exceeding \$150.00! After John Mutch had seen my ads on eBay, he asked me to write a brief article on how to sell electronically. (Of course, this was nearly a year ago and after much prodding by John, here it is.)

Truthfully, selling in an on-line auction is fairly easy. Each auction house recognizes the average computer user and web-surfer is not a techno-geek with a Masters Degree in Computer Engineering from ITT Tech. As such, the auction houses have made posting items on their listings as easy as possible with walk-through instructions and step-by-step guides which can lead even the most inept of us (I know because I fall into that category). However, when it comes to posting images or pictures of the item you want to sell, it can become a little more difficult. So rather than discussing how to post an item or sell in an on-line auction, I thought it would be more educational for us to learn a little about how to post images into your auction. Because I am a simple computer user, my loose use computer terminology may be offensive to some, but please bear with me, this article is only meant to get you started.

To begin with, it does help to know some computer lingo:

HTML – HyperText Markup Language – programming language used to create and modify web pages and other internet-related activities.

URL – Universal Resource Locator - a fancy way of saying “Web address”.

ISP – Internet Service Provider – the company who provides you access to the internet.

FTP – File Transfer Protocol – the functions used to transfer files, images, text, etc. from your personal computer to the internet.

.jpg – “J-Peg” – an image format in computer language.

Before you post an image on an on-line auction house, I highly recommend selling a couple of items with descriptions only. This will enable you to get a grasp on the different nuances such as listing fees, auction house commissions, mass mailings, postage, insurance, e-mail confirmations, etc. These are not difficult to understand and should not stop anyone from selling on-line. Experiment and have fun!

Once you get the handle on selling on-line, you will naturally want to post images of some of your more valuable or detailed items. Images enable the bidder to get a better idea of condition, color, size, variety, etc. of the item before bidding. There are even some who believe pictures help promote spirited bidding. I think images should and must be used when the item is particularly rare, unusual, or of such a condition that mere descriptive words fail. I would not use an image for a group lot of 1980 through 1990 U.S. Proof Sets, as that simple description is

more than sufficient. However, I would use an image for a postcard, a sticker dollar, or a trade token from an unusual town. For most auction houses, there is no additional cost to post an image.

Posting an image requires, of course, an image to begin with. I know of only three basic methods of capturing a picture of your item into digital format: 1) digital camera, 2) scanner, and 3) video camera. Digital cameras are simply cameras that place the pictures onto a computer diskette instead of onto film. The pictures on the diskette can then be placed into your computer for future use. Some digital cameras can be connected via cables directly to the computer so you can by-pass the diskette. Digital cameras provide great images but can be cost prohibitive. However, as with anything in this world of high technology, prices seem to be dropping daily.

Scanners are like photocopiers but instead of producing a copy onto another piece of paper, it "puts" the copy into electronic format for use on your computer. There are many different types of scanners out there and the prices range from \$50 to \$5,000. I recently saw an ad for a neat desk-top scanner that allows you to scan an item and place that image directly onto the internet with the push of a single button (\$150). For the first images I posted onto eBay, I used a scanner.

Video cameras are nothing new. However, what you are able to do with the video image is new. With the right video editing equipment and software, it is now possible for you to video tape your item, place the video image onto your computer, and choose which video frame best reflects the item's image. I have spoken with several people currently selling on eBay who use this method simply because they already had a video camera and the additional equipment and software was less than \$200.

As soon as you get an electronic image of the item you wish to sell, you have to make sure it is in the proper format. There are MANY different digital image formats out there in the world and each one was created for specific uses. Formats are identified by the file names extensions on them. For example, "*corvette.bmp*" would be a file name for an image of a Chevrolet Corvette automobile (*corvette*) and the format would be a bitmap (*.bmp*). Currently, the best all-purpose and general use format is .jpg. When you have an electronic image to use, look at the file name extension to see what format it is. Many auction houses will only accept images in the .jpg format. Some also accept .gif formats as well. If your image is not in one of the required formats, you will need to re-format the images with photo-manipulation software. (I learned this the hard way when the scanner I am currently using only saves images into .bmp formats.) However, you must beware. Whenever you re-format an image, you will automatically begin to degrade the quality of that image. As a rule of thumb, capture the image in the desired format first. It is important to understand something at this point. When an image is used for an auction, the auction house doesn't actually have that image. That would take up too much space on their computers. Instead, auction houses "look" or "seek" for your image and then temporarily post the image on the listing. In order to do this, the auction house needs to have an address (or URL) to look for the image. After you have an image ready to go, the auction house needs it. I know of two ways to do this: personal web sites and image hosting services.

Various ISPs offer free web sites for subscribers to use as their own. To create, customize or modify your web site, you will either need to know how to use HTML or purchase web page software. HTML is like computer programming language for web page management. For example, `<hr>` is HTML for "hard return" and `<center> Hi Mom </center>` would center the

sentence "Hi Mom" on the web page. Unless you know how to read and write in HTML, I recommend using web page software. Which ever method you choose, you must follow some simple rules. First, you must design the web page on your computer. Next, depending on your ISP, you may have to name the first web page "index.html". Third, you have to perform an FTP to copy the created web page from your computer to the ISP's computer. All of the web page software available have FTPs already included. Other FTPs can be tried for free by downloading off the internet or with the internet access software pre-loaded on your computer. Once you have a web page designed, simply use an FTP to post your image onto your personal internet site. Doing this will give your image a URL which is needed for the auction house to find and then post your image (remember, your image isn't stored at the auction house). You are now ready to post an image, so go to the auction house and follow their posting directions. One thing the auction house will ask for is your image's URL, so don't forget to write this down when designing your web page. The step-by-step directions for posting images with URLs at eBay is fairly straightforward. <http://pages.ebay.com/aw/newitem.html>.

The other method of posting an image is using an on-line image hosting service. These are companies who will, for free or a very small fee, post your images for you. I have never used these but it appears you still have to have an image in a usable format (.jpg or .gif). The basic operation here is that you e-mail the image to the hosting service and they will automatically provide a URL for the image (off their ISP) and place the image onto the auction house listing for you. A major benefit of this is you don't have to have a web page to get the images posted. A free hosting service I have found is www.AuctionWatch.com.

After you get your image posted and your ad written, just sit back and watch the bidding commence. Personally, I enjoy selling more than buying because I can watch other people's interest in something I had collecting dust on my shelves. By the way, because on-line auctioning is growing in popularity everyday, there are some services available on-line to assist you. Among these is www.auctionwatchers.com, an on-line service which will check all active auction houses for specific items you are looking for (or so they claim). There is also a free weekly newsletter which rates the different auction houses and provides reviews of new ones as well as changes in the overall market (freespeech@angelfire.com). Other sources of assistance may be the following ISPs who offer free web pages and e-mails:
<http://familypoint.com> www.geocities.com www.tripod.com www.angelfire.com

Auction houses I have seen or heard of include:

www.ebay.com
www.up4auction.com
www.auctionuniverse.com
www.yahoo.com (a yahoo auction)
www.bidnow.com
www.peddlerpusher.com
www.excite.com (a general auction from excite)
www.amazon.com
www.ontrackauction.com
www.playle.com (postcards, jewelry, stamps, music)

For an example of a web page created for the use of posting images onto on-line auctions, check out my web site at <http://netnow.micron.net/~rhigdem>. If you have any other questions, comments, or suggestions my e-mail is rhigdem@micron.net.

The Father of Arco

Born on April 5, 1857 in Sunbury, Pennsylvania, John Elwood Smith went west when he was 21 years of age. He found employment in a mercantile establishment in Fort Benton, Montana, and later served for five years as Post Trader at this last port on Missouri River. Steamboats plied the Missouri bringing supplies and mining machinery up the river and returning with furs, ingots of precious metals, and agricultural goods. On May 6, 1890 Smith married Edith Mary Parker in Helena and soon moved to Pocatello where he also was in the mercantile business. In 1891 they moved to Hailey and in 1892 to a farm at Houston, just two miles southeast of Mackay. There a son, Sherman, and a daughter, Violet, were born to the couple.

Smith made the acquaintance of John H. Greene of Mackay who was opening a general store at Custer, on the Yankee Fork of the Salmon River to supply the miners flocking there. Smith agreed to manage the store at Custer, also taking on duties as commissary agent and banker for the General Custer Mining Company. After the Custer boom, Greene and Smith became partners, purchasing the stock of the Farris Brothers' general store at old Arco, and moving it to the present townsite.

Arco has had three locations over the years, starting out as a stage station called Root Hog where the Blackfoot - Wood River and Blackfoot - Salmon River stage roads split. This site was about 5 miles south of the present city. About 1880 the stage station was moved to a second site [later known as old Arco] 4 miles southeast of the present city. With the building of the Blackfoot - Mackay railroad, J. E. Smith helped select the new Arco townsite on the south side of the tracks just below Arco Peak, the south extremity of the Lost River Mountains.

Here Greene and Smith built a two-story rock building to house their store. Besides being general manager of the store, J. E. Smith was president of the Arco Townsite Company, Arco Publishing Company, Arco Commercial Club, Arco Telephone Company, and chairman of the village board of trustees. He later became vice president of the Bank of Commerce (Arco's first bank) and managed the Arco Wool Warehouse Company. He was Arco's first mayor and in 1933 he was appointed Butte County Assessor and was re-elected thereafter.



On March 24, 1903, the J. E. Smith Company, Limited was incorporated with John E. Greene as president and John E. Smith as secretary, treasurer, and general manager. Capitalization was set at \$50,000, but only about \$23,000 was actually subscribed with Greene holding 2/3 and Smith 1/3. The stated purpose of the corporation was "to buy, own, hold, and sell real estate and personal property of every kind and description, and to carry on general merchandise, banking, telephone, canal, farm, stock raising, mining, smelting, stage line and freight forwarding businesses".



J. E. and Edith Smith enjoyed being in the great outdoors around Arco. As a hobby they would propose new roads and survey the routes using field glasses. He laid out the route to Blackfoot across the desert and the road from Arco to the Craters of the Moon. His death came on the morning of May 31, 1942, as he and Mrs. Smith were planning an outing to the desert south of Arco. His funeral was one of the largest ever in Arco, with Governor C. A. Bottolfsen reading the obituary.



The tokens used by the J. E. Smith & Co. business are typical of general merchandise tokens of the era. The aluminum pieces are in denominations of 5, 10, 25, 50, and 100. These tokens have been available in a relatively large quantity for many years. I have seen at least 12 complete sets in collections, and numerous scattered individual pieces. The \$1 denomination appears to be a bit less common than the

others. One unusual feature of this set was spotted by "Eagle Eye" Dean Rasmussen – you recall several months ago that Dean reported the tiny letter "S" at the bottom of the obverse of the J. E. Smith tokens of Arco. Now (after I examine some and speculate that it is a maker's mark) he finds some more letters. At the top is a tiny "B", and at the left and right are tiny "G"s. Presumably this reads "B-G-G-S" and was intended to convey some meaning. Any theories? The best I could muster was to suppose the "G" stood for J. H. Greene, president of the J. E. Smith Co., Ltd., but I have no idea about the B and the other G.

1999 Gathering

Dick Magnuson and Mike Fritz are working on our get-together this summer. Barring a conflict with the Vancouver token show (anyone have the date for that?), the plan is to be in Wallace over the weekend of July 24, 1999. The places and exact times will be finalized by the next issue of this newsletter so we can get our reservations. Shoshone County has an amazing amount of historical sites, and we should be able to take in some of them. If you have Internet access, go to http://wallace-id.com/w_index.html for the "Historic Wallace" website. It is a neat presentation with stories and pictures of what to expect in Wallace.

Mavericks

Dan Lute recently obtained an Owyhee County maverick that will be pictured in a future issue. It allowed me to attribute a companion piece I had as well. Dan also has obtained some others via the metal detector route; his research placed their origins in Boise.

Dean Rasmussen came up with a nice new Soda Springs maverick as well. Articles to follow.

Best regards,

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